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Honor Killings in Jordan: An Examination of Public Discourse

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree of Middle Eastern Studies in Global Studies from
The College of William and Mary

by

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The paper focuses on Jordan's extreme case of female inequality through researching instances of honor crimes. The study includes a discussion of the honor/shame complex in Jordan, traditions that fortify honor and shame, and how honor definitions differ within the Jordanian society. My sources include an interview conducted with a police officer from the family protection department, a comparison of two books addressing Jordanian traditions, and an analysis of online comments to newspaper articles on instances of honor crimes. Through an examination of my preliminary and secondary sources I produce a comprehensive understanding of the Jordanian discourse of honor, which enables scholars and activists to properly and effectively address the issue of honor crimes in Jordan.

I. Introduction

I clearly remember sitting at the kitchen table in my house in Amman with a police officer who is a family friend in the summer of 2008. While my mother was making tea, he asked me about my field of studies, and I seized the opportunity to talk about my interest in honor crimes in Jordan. He responded by telling me how I was not aware how lucky I was to have understanding parents, and then he told me about the events of a case that occurred earlier that month: a father shot his daughter and her suitor while they were praying. In a sad tone he proceeded to tell me that the daughter approached her father about a man she loved and intended to marry. In the exchange of words, the father suspected that his daughter was engaged in immoral relations with her lover and therefore feared that she was bringing shame to the family. He asked both his daughter and her lover to appear in his house, where he tricked them into believing that he approved their union. He then told them to go pray the *fātiḥa*, which is the first *sūra* of the Qur'an, usually recited at funerals and at weddings (Oxford Islamic Studies 2010). The couple did as told because they thought they had his blessings for their marriage. Nevertheless, he shot both of them in an attempt to purify his honor. I recall the officer

shaking his head and say “*ḥarām, rāḥu!*” meaning “It is a shame, they are gone now.”

The police officer described the crime scene as a mess as he sipped his tea in front of me.

A perusal of the Jordanian press makes it clear that the incident the officer recounted to me is not unusual. Jordanian newspapers in the summer of 2009 had various accounts of honor crimes. On Saturday, July 4 2009, for example, the local page of the Jordanian *al-Ra’i* newspaper featured an article about a twenty-five year old Jordanian woman who was awoken from sleep by her brother, who then murdered his sister because of “immoral activity on her part” (*taṣarrufāt ghayr akhlāqīa min qibālha*). *Al-Ra’i* published another article by Suhair Bushnaq on August 16 2009, describing the murder of a sixteen-year old girl who was killed by her father after being raped by her own uncle. Scholars and news sources estimate an average of twenty honor crimes a year and this topic has become a focus of the Jordanian society more than ever (Al-Ra’ud 2009). It has been said that Jordan has the highest per capita rate of honor killings in the world, with honor killings accounting for more than one fourth of all reported homicides (Goldstein 2002:31). Activists have emerged to fight the existence of these crimes alongside the international community, through organizations such as the United Nations Department Fund for Women, and UNIFEM, which have denounced their persistence (UNIFEM 2007). However, with a legal system that allows for reduced penalties for perpetrators of honor crimes, women continue to die unjustly (Warrick 2005:315), and the threat of honor crimes strongly influences the relations among the members of Jordanian society.

In Jordan, the persistence of honor crimes gives rise to many questions.¹ Who is usually the target of honor crimes and why are they still occurring? What is the underlying reason for their existence? What does honor mean in the Arab and Jordanian context and how does it help us understand the society and the phenomenon of crimes of honor? In this study, I attempt to address these questions through an in-depth analysis of three forms of public discourse on the issue of honor crimes. Although the term is flexible and can take in a vast range of things, discourse certainly encompasses all statements made by people reflecting their opinion on a certain topic (Abu-Lughod 1986:186-187). Discourse is central because it is the “set of statements, verbal and nonverbal, bound by rules and characterized by regularities, that both constructs and is patterned by social and personal reality” (186). Stuart Hall expands on the concept of discourse in his essay, “The West and The Rest: Discourse and Power,” using Foucault’s discussion of “discursive formation” (Hall 2007:56). Discursive formation is the collection of statements that fit together due to a common strategy that is found in all of them. Studying the discursive formation helps in understanding the ideologies that people have about their social world. Studying the language used to describe the social world helps discern the truthfulness of these facts (56-57). For example, Edward Said’s discussion of Orientalism shows how European discourse on the Middle East constructed facts about the Middle East that were not accurate and helped to further European

¹ Throughout this paper, I will be using the terms honor killings and honor crimes interchangeably. The difference between the two is that honor killing is the actual death of the victim, while honor crime is the overarching category indicating both attempted and accomplished murders in the name of restoring family honor. As suggested by the work of several scholars, the act of murder is said to cleanse the family honor when accusations of the breaking of limits on sexual activity are made (Faqr2001:69, Nanes 2003:117). My discussion will address the issue of honor crimes as well as the fundamental notion of honor in the Jordanian context.

imperial projects (57). Since discourse shapes and is shaped by society, it is central to understanding the existence of honor crimes.

I aim to gain insight into the phenomenon of honor crimes through examination of Jordanian society and its discourse about honor. The examples of discourse surrounding honor crimes that I use to explore Jordanian society include an interview with a police officer from the family protection department; scholarly and journalistic literature written by Jordanians about honor crimes; and readers' comments on news articles about honor crimes. In order to understand these examples of discourse, however, I examine the existing literature on honor crimes in Jordan and the wider region, and on the notion of honor in the Arab world and beyond. I also examine the gaps in the existing literature, and demonstrate how those gaps reflect important aspects of the social system that supports honor crimes. I find that honor crimes in Jordan are closely linked to the patriarchal and patrilineal character of Jordanian society and are one expression of a larger social ideology of honor that molds and is molded by people's discourse and actions. The discourse in Jordan, however, is conflicting, making it particularly difficult to address the issue of honor crimes.

II. Honor crimes in comparative perspective.

One of the profound challenges to understanding honor crimes in Jordan is the lack of reliable data. For example, there is little demographic information about the Jordanians who commit honor crimes (Warrick 2005:324-325). The fact that such crimes have been reported among urban, professional families even as the popular opinion associates them with the socially conservative sector of the population in rural areas makes the lack of demographic data particularly frustrating (325). It is also worth remembering that homicide records from Jordan's Higher Court of Justice do not accurately document the victim or perpetrator's socioeconomic status (Kulwicki 2002:80-81). Native Jordanians of Bedouin descent claim that these crimes are common in Jordanian-Palestinian families, while Jordanians of Palestinian origin are adamant that native Jordanian tribalism fuels honor crimes (Warrick 2005:325). It is difficult to obtain reliable data linking honor crimes to ethnic or class identities, although it seems clear that these crimes are not confined to only one sector of Jordanian society.

Even more difficulties present themselves with regard to reliable figures. Jordanian sources pertaining to honor crimes must be considered with a grain of salt because of various ambiguities and unknowns. Records of honor crimes vary among sources due to the complications and lack of accuracy when it comes to reporting. Scholars often speak of the "dark figure," or the unofficial records of honor killings (Faqir 2001:68). These are the widely undocumented crimes that lead to a discrepancy with the official records. Such discrepancy can be seen in the official sources dealing with honor crimes (68). Jordanian news articles claim fourteen to eighteen killings a year (Al-Ra'ud 2009). However, other scholars approximate twenty-five such murders take

place a year, making Jordan have the highest per capita rate of honor killings in the world, within the relatively small population of five million (Faqr 2001:68). UNIFEM (2007) shows in its report of honor crimes that between the years 2000-2006, ninety-seven cases took place, meaning a yearly average of sixteen honor killings.

According to the UNIFEM report (2007), honor crime data in Jordan depict numbers that are much smaller than what they are in reality. Because the killer necessarily comes from within the family, it is likely that most families do not report cases of honor crimes, and if the police apprehend the killer, his family is likely to drop all charges against him (Husseini 2009:26). Additionally, the numbers may not include cases in which the family convinces the woman to commit suicide rather than kill her for her actions (Faqr 2001:68). Moreover, these numbers do not include women who committed suicide in fear of their family's reaction. The number estimated for the cases of honor crimes is likely to be understated, especially since the study done by Human Forum for Women's Rights in Jordan in 1999 estimates that only 7.5% of sexual abuse crimes, including honor crimes, are reported every year (68). Therefore, Jordan is already at a disadvantage when it comes to knowing exactly what it is facing.

The difficulties with regard to statistics point to some important social features of the problem. As the preceding paragraph suggested, honor killings by definition involve the perpetrator and the victim coming from the same family, and the killings are sanctioned by the heads of the household. Because the families of the victims and perpetrators do not view the murders as criminal, they rarely get reported to the police. Furthermore, when honor crimes do enter the court system, the records are inaccurate and the targets of such crimes are at a disadvantage.

Murder is illegal in Jordan, and article 6 of the Jordanian constitution “guarantees the rights of all Jordanian citizens regardless of their gender” (73). Yet even reported honor killings often go without being punished. The reduced penalty is one way in which the Jordanian legal system fails victims of honor crimes. In Jordan, a reduced penalty is used when the judicial system views the crime as a crime of passion (Al-Ra'ud 2009). Reduced penalties originated from the French legal code, which recognizes a category of homicide committed under “unnatural circumstances” (*ḡurūf ghayr ṭabī‘ya*) (Al-Ra'ud 2009). For example, Article 98 of the Jordanian legal code states that “he who commits a crime in a fit of fury caused by an unrightful and dangerous act on the part of the victim benefits from a reduction of penalty” (Nanes 2003:118). Particularly striking is the lack of reciprocity: if a woman were to commit a crime in a fit of fury when her husband compromised their marriage through adultery, she would not receive a reduced penalty (73). Article 340, another opportunity for reduced penalty of honor crimes, states,

- 1) he who catches his wife or one of his female unlawfuls [relatives] committing adultery with another and he kills, wounds or injures one or both of them is exempt from any penalty.
 - 2) he who catches his wife, or one of his female ascendants or descendants or sisters with another in an unlawful bed and he kills, wounds or injures one or both of them benefits from a reduction in penalty.
- (Nanes 2003:117)

Article 340 has only been used once because of the difficulty of proving it (117).

Nevertheless, taken as a whole, the constitution seems to work more to encourage honor crimes than to deter them.

Jordanian families are very much aware of the potential consequences of breaking the law and committing honor crimes. Honor killings are frequently executed by family members who are under the age of eighteen in order to get an even further reduced

penalty (Faqr 2001:73). Furthermore, article 7 of the legal code claims to give protection to women if suspected of adultery. This “Prevention of Crimes Law” of 1954 places women who are threatened by honor killings in prisons or rehabilitation centers as “administrative detainees” (73). They are kept side-by-side with criminals, knowing that if they are released their families would end their lives.

There is clearly a disjuncture between the stated intentions of the legal system and the values of many Jordanians, and it is clear that the legal system is in some ways the weak link. This is not to say, however, that there is no opposition to honor crimes among Jordanians. News sources have reported in recent years that activists, doctors and lawyers have been speaking against honor crimes, urging courts to imprison perpetrators for more than the usual six month sentence (Ghabbun 2009).

Activity against honor killings began as early as the 1980s, when female lawyers began speaking out about the crimes (Husseini 2009:9). In 1994, The Jordanian Women’s Union established a “violence hotline,” which in turn motivated journalist and women’s rights advocate, Rana Husseini, to increase awareness through her very controversial reports on honor crimes in the Jordan Times (9). As a result, the Campaign to Eliminate So-called Crimes of Honor was formed to fight the Jordanian legal code that deals with honor crimes. The Campaign to Eliminate So-called Crimes of Honor began their journey to fight honor crimes by appealing to the parliament to abolish Article 340 as well as 98 (36).

The Campaign faced many logistical problems in its attempt to get signatures for a petition against Article 340 and Article 98. Husseini has described the intricate process

of eliciting support for their cause: Palestinians were excluded from signing the petition to amend the constitution due to their political status, and the native Jordanians were too scared to support something that opposed the current system (Husseini 2009:53-54). In addition, some of the Campaign members were harassed by security forces once their cause became known (43). The international response to a CNN segment featuring Husseini and highlighting Jordanian honor crimes, combined with petition launched by the campaign, elicited a response from the royal family (Clark 2003:39. In 1997, King Abdullah proposed amendments to abolish article 340 and introducing harsher punishment for murderers and adulterers alike which was approved by the cabinet but “overwhelmingly defeated by an alliance of tribal leaders and Islamists” (38). The refusal of amendments was justified through the argument that they were an invitation to obscenity and foreign influence (40). After dissolving the parliament in 2001, King Abdullah attempted to present the amendments; however, the lower house vetoed it in 2003 (41). The members of the lower house of the parliament again accused the West of attempting to corrupt Jordanian society (Clark 41).

The Campaign, human rights activists, and the royal family remain persistent on the need to limit honor crimes and remove the laws that protect murderers. The Campaign has received international recognition for their achievements and members remain active in raising awareness about the problem of honor crimes (Clark 2003:41). The royal family also took another initiative through a public address to the Jordanian people (Husseini 2009:38-41).

Thus far, then, efforts to combat honor crimes in Jordan have met with mixed success. In many ways, the ambivalence and weakness of the Jordanian legal system with

regard to honor killings reflect the conflict between the values of a state-directed legal process rooted in international norms and a persistent ideology among citizens that justifies honor killings. As will be explored in later pages, this ideology is rooted in the notion of honor. For the moment, however, it is important to note how the Jordanian case fits into a wider regional pattern. As I have already hinted at, honor crimes are not only a Jordanian phenomenon. Understanding the regional and international context for the phenomenon is essential for moving this analysis forward.

When it comes to honor crimes, Jordan has many neighbors. In Palestine, seventy percent of all murders of women have been attributed to honor crimes (King 2008:319). By some accounts, Syria also ranks high with the most occurrences of honor killings (Syria-News 2010). Cases of honor killing have occurred in Iraqi Kurdistan (King 2008:319). Two hundred honor crimes occur in Turkey each year making up half of all murders (Tait 2010). In many of the cases in the Arab world, honor crimes are not fully punished—a function of the fact that constitutional inequality with regard to gender is common in the Arab world. Arab constitutions divide society into a public and private realm (El Saadawi 1988:11). They provide equality only in the public sector, leaving the private open to oppression and exploitation (11). For Egyptian feminist physician Nawal El Saadawi, this “schizophrenic split in the law” was created when colonial powers chose not to amend personal status laws of the region (12). According to El Saadawi, women have become victims of this schizophrenia and their bodies show the contradictions of society. Gender inequality reinforced by constitutions undoubtedly contributes to the existence of honor crimes.

Honor crimes are not limited to the Muslim countries of the Mediterranean. Some scholarly works claim that the phenomenon of honor killing belongs to the “Arab east,” yet incidents have been reported that suggest otherwise (King 2008:319). Honor crimes have taken place in Pakistan and in the Italian cities of Sardinia and Sicily, as well as Greece (319). Honor crimes have a broader context than just the Muslim or Arab Mediterranean countries.

It is crucial to recognize that not only are honor crimes not confined to Arab and/or Muslim societies, but that there are many forms of violence directed specifically against women. While conducting this research, I was reminded constantly that Jordan is not alone in regard to gender inequality, and that the world has seen many forms of violence against women. Reports have indicated that women were executed during the Roman Empire, where adultery was punishable by death (Goldstein 2002: 29). The Incas in Peru punished women adulterers by binding their hands and feet and leaving them to starve between 1200 A.C.E. and 1532 A.C.E (29). The French legal system used the term “crime of love” to describe the murder of adulterous women (Husseini 2009:224). Defense of honor has also been reported as a reason for murder of women in Brazil (Warrick 2003:324). Murder of women is present irrespective of cultural and religious differences. Even though crimes against women happen in other countries and cultures, honor killing is often wrongly associated with the Arab and Muslim world. It is essential to view honor crimes as a form of violence against women that is not solely associated with Arab, Middle Eastern, or Muslim countries. Viewing honor crimes as a form of violence against women makes the issue more universal and inclusive, rather than limited to one part of the world, and it also works against the ongoing stereotypes of Arabs and

Muslims. Nevertheless, it is important not to lose sight of the specific qualities of honor crimes. For example, I would argue that domestic violence in the United States should not be considered an example of an honor crime. The existence of a notion of honor that can be observed in society, through actions and communication forms, allows for the murders that I am writing about here to be labeled as honor killings.

Despite the fact that honor crimes are just one example of systematic violence against women, and despite the fact that honor crimes are not an exclusively Arab or Muslim phenomenon, discussion of honor crimes often gets wrapped together with discussions of Islam and Arabness. For example, even though there are examples of Muslim countries, such as Indonesia, that are free of honor crimes (Stone 1997:271). Some scholars consider Islam to be a causal mechanism for honor killings in the Middle East. Matthew Goldstein (2002), for example, has argued that the phenomenon of honor killing exists in many parts of the world because of “maladaptive by-products of an evolved male sexual aggression subject to intensification by external threats to paternal certainty” (Goldstein 2002:28). He claims honor killings are particularly encouraged by Islam in the Arab world, especially in Jordan (31). Islam, he argues, provides an excuse for crimes of honor (31). And since the Jordanian legal system is based on Islamic law, the biological male aggression is sustained in the excused heat-of-passion crimes (31 and CIA The World Factbook 2009). In his brief response to Matthew Goldstein's paper, Mohammad Khalili (2002) refutes Goldstein's claim that Islam is at the root of honor killings in Jordan. In his comment, Khalili acknowledges the existence of violence and honor killings in Jordan and the Middle East, yet he argues that these crimes exist in other parts of the world where Islam is not dominant (Khalili 2002:39-40). Khalili argues

that rape is prevalent in Christian communities, but that does not imply that Christianity allows or encourages such crimes (40). In addition, Khalili provides numerous verses from the Qur'an that deal with women and punishment in cases of adultery (38). Khalili concludes that one cannot blame religion for the existence of honor crimes; one must study the cultural, historical, and legal factors (39).

The discussion of Islamic views on honor killings has become extensive. For many defenders against the notion that Islam is somehow responsible for honor killings, it is important to point out that Islam has been opposed to gender inequality since its inception. During the *Jāhiliyya* period (pre-Islam), femicide, or burying of young girls, was permitted among the Arabian tribes, and Islam abolished such crimes (Faqr 2001:74). Dr. al-Majali, a Jordanian emeritus professor of Shar'ia in the University of Mu'ta, states that Islam forbids murder of people unless it was justified by revenge (possibly for damaging one's honor in one way or another), punishment for adultery, or apostasy (Al-Ra'ud 2009). Dr. al-Majali elaborates the grounds on which *zinā*, adultery, should be convicted and dealt with according to Islam. He claims that the case of adultery should first be presented to an audience of Muslim *fuqahā*' (scholars) alongside four witnesses who can prove the act (Al-Ra'ud 2009). If the accused was proven guilty, then the punishment entails stoning to death. Islam clearly provides a form of a trial for the accused person. A deviation of the Islamic way of dealing with adultery, such as honor killing, is considered intentional manslaughter (Al-Ra'ud 2009). Al-Majali's view of the Islamic legal view of *zinā* is consistent with that depicted in Elyse Semerdjian's study of sex and law in Ottoman Aleppo, which is one of the few works to look at honor killings in historical context (2008).

This being said, many people who support honor crimes claim that they are supported by Islam. Shahin Gerami has shown one group of fundamentalist Arab women from Egypt to believe strongly in the ideal of a family where the woman is seen as an operating member and the man as the gatekeeper or protector (Gerami 1996:157). Women with such beliefs agree that a woman should be punished for desecrating the family's honor since it would be because she failed to play the part that Islam laid out for her. Moreover, they see that the man's responsibility as a protector of the family and its Islamic values legitimize crimes of honor (157). Consequently, for these women, honor crimes are considered fair punishment for suspected adulterous women. Suzanne Ruggi (1998) states that although honor killings are non-Islamic, there are those supporters of honor crimes who state that Islam encourages honor crimes. She cites the work of Abdelwahab Bouhdiba on sexuality in Islam, who claims that the Qur'an provides examples of male supremacy and "strict separation of the masculine and the feminine," implicitly encouraging honor crimes (Ruggi 1998:15).

At the same time, the existence of women who believe that Islam rightfully justifies gender inequality is counter-balanced by women who believe in Islamic feminism. This movement, in which women maintain their religious identities while adapting to the secular, political realm of the globalized world, has developed in the Arab world during the past twenty-five years (Cooke 2000:150). The Islamic feminists face challenges of patriarchy within the *umma* as they attempt to maintain good relations with the wider Islamic community (150). These Islamic feminists attempt to gently merge the concepts of Islam and gender equality (151). Nevertheless, they are challenged with the preconceived notion in the Arab world that feminism means Westernization and therefore

corruption (151) Therefore, they use Islam to advocate for equality between the genders (151).

The existence of the two groups of Muslim women, advocating two extremely different gender roles, brings attention to the differences in interpreting Islam. These differences are vital to the creation of gender roles in Islam, as well as the continuation or limiting of honor crimes. Although the legal evidence seems to suggest that honor killing is not a Muslim institution, many supporters of honor killings do cite Islamic teachings to support their position, even if they are wrong about those teachings. This issue will return during the analysis of Jordanian public discourse regarding honor killings. It will be essential to address the question of why supporters of honor killings persist in drawing support from alleged Islamic teachings.

An alternative approach has been to look for the roots of honor crimes not in Islam but in Arab culture, or to look to some combination of the two. Richard Antoun (1968), looking at the Jordanian village of Kufr el Ma, argues that Islam and village customs have created a modesty code that applies to both men and women, but in fact mainly limits the freedom of the female population. For Antoun, the modesty code is created by structural, psychological and historical factors that make it especially difficult to break (Antoun 1968:671). Antoun sees the modesty code as a set of beliefs that are “self-justifying and self-perpetuating” (690). Enough evidence is present in the Qur’an to portray women as emotionally weaker and ritually inferior, as seen in codes of ritual purity (672). The modesty code is also justified through the argument that women are physically weak and dependent on their male protectors, meaning that they need to be protected from malicious men (673).

Antoun's claims have been criticized on a number of occasions. Nadia Abu-Zahra (1970) has argued that it is methodologically deceptive to try to account for the code of modesty in illiterate Arab Muslim villages "by dubious interpretation of Qur'anic verses or archaic literary Arabic words." (1081) Abu-Zahra's questioning of Antoun's argument weakens the claim that the modesty code is supported by Islam. She has suggested that a more representative pool of Arab Muslim villages should be studied and compared to get a more accurate analysis of a society (Abu-Zahra 1970:1080). She also argues that it is not effective to generalize regarding the modesty of Arab Muslim women by analyzing an individual Arab community (1081). She claims that it is difficult to determine whether religion or community traditions have shaped this particular society (1081).

The debate between Antoun and Abu-Zahra stresses the differences among various Arab communities, especially with regard to Islam and culture, making it difficult to expand definitions of honor across all Arab or all Muslim communities. Yet the literature on honor in Arab societies and in the larger Mediterranean region is considerable. Because the concept of honor is central to any attempt to understand honor crimes, it is necessary to turn our attention to the patterns that emerge from this literature. Honor is pivotal in motivating honor crimes, so it is essential to understand the notion of honor before we proceed any further in analyzing people's discourse. In the next section I will delve deeper into some of the scholarly discussions I have touched on thus far discussing the possible promoters of honor crimes. I will also explore the current manifestation of the widely-agreed upon concept of honor in the Arab world.

III. The notion of honor

In order to completely grasp the atmosphere in which honor killings occur, one must study the socio-political and historical factors that helped create the notion of honor in Jordan and in the wider Arab world. Scholars have debated various reasons behind such acts by exploring the social, religious, and political aspects of life in the Middle East. Scholars agree on the strong presence of the concept of honor in the Middle East. What is honor and how does one protect it? More importantly, why does one protect it? Breaking down the concept of honor and how it is understood in the Middle East and Jordan paints a clearer image of how the society functions and the social background that contributes to honor crimes' existence. Defining the notion of honor gives clarity to the phenomenon of killing women to cleanse a family from shame and I give some examples of its manifestation that may contribute to the existence of honor killings.

The notion of honor and shame has played a prominent role in the anthropology of the Middle East, North Africa, and of the Mediterranean region. In a useful review article on the anthropology of the Mediterranean published in 1982, David Gilmore cites honor/shame as a key concept that is shared among the Mediterranean countries, all of which, he claims, are characterized by

a strong urban orientation; a corresponding disdain for the peasant way of life and for manual labor; sharp social, geographic, and economic stratification; political instability and a history of weak states; "atomistic" community life; rigid sexual segregation; a tendency toward reliance on the smallest possible kinship units (nuclear families and shallow lineages); strong emphasis on shifting, ego-centered, noncorporate coalitions...[and] an honor and- shame syndrome which defines both sexuality and personal reputation (Gilmore 1982:178-179).

Moreover, he explains that the Mediterranean societies share the ideology of male dominance coupled with family solidarity (180). Another shared trait includes what anthropologists have conceptualized as a “battle for personal honor of family reputation” (189). For Gilmore, the communities surrounding the Mediterranean share the concept of maintaining a “moral community” to ensure social order (189). As will become clearer through my analysis of discourse, the Mediterranean paradigm of honor and shame has echoes in the Jordanian social context.

Gilmore also discusses the issue of masculinity and honor through the family structure. He suggests that the masculine concept of honor is simply a “symbolic arena or outlet for male aggressions and competitive tensions” (Gilmore 1982:191). Nevertheless, Gilmore does admit that the concept of honor can mean various things in different areas of the Mediterranean, so it requires much clarification (191). Works on Mediterranean honor shows that it contains what he calls three vectors of competition: wealth, respect and status, and masculinity (191). The masculinity presented by the men of the Mediterranean allows for the recycling of the exaggerated idea of the “ungovernable female sexuality” (195). Anthropologists have reported people of the Mediterranean viewing a woman as a “lascivious temptress,” “of the devil,” “the rope of Satan,” “a sorceress,” “sexually rapacious,” and “explosive like gunpowder” (195).

While Gilmore sees honor and shame as central to Mediterraneanist anthropology, Michael Herzfeld (1980) has argued that the anthropologists of the Mediterranean have over-generalized the concepts of honor and shame. The comprehensive definitions have ignored the cultural and linguistic meanings of honor and shame that are tied to each individual country. Therefore, Herzfeld disagrees with an aggregate definition of honor

and shame when it comes to the Mediterranean (Herzfeld 1980:340). Furthermore, he urges ethnographers to study the terminologies of honor and shame in the language of the respective country (340).

Abu-Lughod has contributed yet a third view to this discussion of honor in the Mediterranean. Based on her research among Awlad ‘Ali Bedouin in Egypt’s Western Desert, Abu-Lughod suggests that shame is not the opposite of honor (Abu Lughod 1986:105-107). She considers shame to be closely related to modesty (*hasham*); *hasham* is not dishonor, but rather the violation of *hasham* leads to dishonor. In other words, in her reading of Bedouin social ideology, shame is a positive characteristic that is a part of a larger ideology of honor. Additionally, Abu-Lughod’s perspective on women and *hasham* gives a gendered perspective on honor and shame. There are specific actions and sayings that women must abide by in order to maintain *hasham* and avoid shame (109-111). Manliness, on the other hand, is a measure of a man’s honor (118). Autonomy and strength are associated with men, while *hasham* and dependency are connected to women (118). This dichotomy of attributes between men and women shows the gendered nature of honor. Women and men maintain honor in different ways, giving honor and shame a gendered character.

While I find Abu-Lughod’s interpretation of shame as an expression of modesty convincing within the context she writes about, in these pages, I use shame in Gilmore’s and Herzfeld’s sense because it more accurately explains the intuition behind committing honor crimes. A woman brings shame to the family when suspected of immorality. Her immorality brings shame to the family, and therefore must be killed to remove that shame that she carries (Abu Lughod 1986:66). Abu-Lughod’s concept of *hasham* relates more

closely to “feelings of shyness, embarrassment, or shame, and the acts are those of the modesty code, a language of formal self-restraint and effacement” (108). A violation of *hasham*, therefore, results in creating a reputation for the woman as both willful and strong, or as promiscuous (109). If a woman is regarded as promiscuous because of her violation of *hasham*, then her reputation would be damaged in society (109). An individual can bring honor to their society by conforming to the social ideals; if these social ideals are compromised, the individual will bring shame or ‘*ayb*.

Despite the differences between the arguments of both Herzfeld, Gilmore, and Abu-Lughod, one can see that they agree upon the existence of a concept of honor with varied meanings in the Mediterranean, expressed differently according to the country, and that this concept of honor is intimately linked to the role of women. The linking of women’s sexuality to honor creates an obvious gender and social inequality. Women display qualities of *hasham* to certain men because they compensate for their dependency on the relatively more powerful individuals (Abu Lughod 1986:113). At the same time, women do not feel fear or shame when they are around people who they have seen exposed or people who are weaker, like husbands or younger men (113). Their assertions that the honor concept plays an important role does hold true in the Jordanian and wider Arab context—a point that has been confirmed by a variety of scholars working on women in the Middle East (Inhorn 1996, Faqir 2001).

Honor and its corresponding notion of shame is present in Arab communities under different labels such as Egyptian Bedouin *hasham* or the Jordanian *sharaf*. Regardless of the name given to honor, this value appears to be associated with sexual restraint for women. Honor is seen as the refraining of women from any form of sexual

activity before or outside marriage (Inhorn 1996:93). The presence of the ideology of honor allows the Arab society to create and reinforce inequality for women. More importantly, it creates negative consequences for diverging from societal norms pertaining to honor; one such negative consequence is honor killing.

Being honorable means acting in a socially acceptable manner while disobeying social norms brings shame. Therefore, “In Arab Muslim culture, the honour of the patrilineal group is bound up with the sex organs of its daughters,” meaning that women engaging in socially inappropriate relationships bring shame (Faqir 2001:67). The catch in this case, however, is that women bring shame to the whole clan or family, not just herself (67). In order to understand why this would be the case, we need to understand how the notion of honor in Jordan and beyond functions in general, and not only in cases of suspected sexual independence. Peter Dodd (1973) has looked at the concept of honor in the Arab family in Jordan. More generally, using the term *‘ird* as his focus. Dodd suggests that *‘ird* is a secular value that is not related to Islam, especially since it existed among pre-Islamic Arabs (Dodd 1973:40). Furthermore, a person’s *‘ird* is generally a reflection of the family’s *‘ird*, and the men of the family (father, brother, father’s brothers and cousins) have the ability and obligation to defend it (40). Once *‘ird* is lost, it is difficult to regain, and it can take many generations to restore (Dodd 1973:42). Dodd suggests that women’s demeanor has the ability to lower or raise *‘ird* as suspicions of sexual immorality threaten the family’s honor (41).

Arabic Term	Transliteration	Translation
شَرَفٌ	<i>Sharaf</i>	Honor
حَشَمٌ	<i>Hasham</i>	Modesty and avoidance of all sexual matters to remain honorable
عِرْضٌ عَرَضٌ*	<i>'Irḍ</i> <i>'Arḍ*</i>	Honor
عَيْبٌ	<i>'Ayb</i>	Imperfection, fault, vice (which all bring dishonor)
عَارٌ	<i>'Ār</i>	Dishonor
خَزَى	<i>Khazā</i>	To shame

* Jordanian colloquial of *'irḍ* meaning honor

Table 1 shows the Arabic terminology of honor. (Abu Lughod 1986:105, Faqir 2001:69, Shryock 1997:21-22 and Dodd 1973:40)

Such a notion of honor as described by Dodd is ingrained in the Jordanian society.

This is reflected in and reinforced by everyday discourse. If we follow Herzfeld's advice and look to the local terminologies regarding honor and shame, it becomes clear that the Jordanian dialect contains various references to honor. It is noteworthy that some of the most insulting curses have to do with honor. *Yil'an sharafak/sharafek*, or, *yil'an 'ārdak/'ārdek* both translate as "May God curse your honor." Another common curse is

yefdah ‘*ardak* or *Allah yikhzīk*, both meaning “May God bring shame to you.” Jordanians also use honor as a promise or guarantee when speaking. They use *bsharafak/bsharafek* or *b’ardak/b’ardek*, meaning “By your honor,” to guarantee that whatever is being said is true.

It is possible that the importance of the notion of honor in everyday Jordanian discourse derives in part from the tribal aspects of Jordanian society. Tribalism is deeply rooted in the Jordanian culture (Shryock 1997:319). Shryock has described the identity that comes with the Jordanian tribal name and how a desecration of honor by an individual would haunt the whole family for generations (319). As Shryock puts it, the “idiom of descent” is related to *sharaf* (Shryock 1997:21-22). Similarly, Antoun has suggested that the very idea of the tribal in Jordan can bring to mind values such as “honor, generosity, and manliness inclusive of such attributes as wisdom, diplomacy, patience, and magnanimity” (Antoun 2000: 445-446). At the same time, for many non-Bedouin Jordanians, tribalism is “un-Islamic because it perpetuates a blind allegiance toward blood kin regardless of their personal merit of extenuating circumstances” (Layne 1989:26). There is a connection between tribal history and the concept of honor, where some tribes may see themselves as *asīl*, having honor that other tribes lack (32). Whether or not one approves of the Bedouin understanding of honor, it is clear that the notion of tribal honor is an all-encompassing principle that deals with “traditional values of generosity, honesty, deference to one’s elders, loyalty to friends, keeping one’s word, and generally controlling one’s emotions and behavior” (32).

Even though honor is a more institutionalized concept among the Bedouin Jordanians, they are not the only group that talks about honor. Honor is an all-encompassing concept in Jordanian society, and honor is intensely gendered. Again, a look at everyday Jordanian speech points out the pattern. One of the most insulting curse words in Jordanian dialect literally translates to, “Your mother’s/sister’s (or any female family member’s) vagina.” This particular curse phrase is interesting since it does not explicitly insult any one: it does not actually use an insulting verb or curse. The phrase is simply an incomplete statement with no offensive wording or implication if taken at a literal and grammatical sense. Nevertheless, it is offensive, since it implies the claiming of a female family member’s vagina, and thus her honor and her family’s honor. This curse phrase seriously harms one’s honor and brings *‘ayb* or *‘ār*, both meaning shame. Similarly, the positive phrases discussed earlier, *bsharafak/bsharafek* or *b’ārdak/b’ārdek*, both meaning “By your honor,” can be extended to swearing by one’s mother’s or sister’s honor to guarantee truth. Honor of the woman is emphasized every day as people swear that they are telling the truth by her honor or wishing they owned it. Everyday words discuss people’s honor and place significance on the honor of the Jordanian woman.

The question remains, what motivates honor crimes to occur? If it is not religion, then it would be worth investigating any cultural explanations available. Abu-Lughod (1986) views honor crimes as a rare cultural occasion in which a family reaffirms power in the eyes of others (286 *n.16*). Just like a case of homicide, the family will avoid vulnerability in the public eye by revenge, and thus “reasserting power and strength, of wiping out the shame of having been attacked.” (286 *n.16*) However, closeness and general humanity of the family members play a main role in the actual execution of an

honor crime. Culture, rather than religion, molds the way in which the Awlad ‘Ali deal with issues pertaining to honor (66).

Rather than appeal to a monolithic Arab culture, it makes more sense to think about what specific societal factors encourage honor killings. Jordan’s patriarchal and patrilineal society is worthy of investigation. Even though cases of honor crimes are seen in mainly Muslim countries, other cases have emerged in non-Muslim contexts. Diane King has suggested that that honor killings only take place within “strongly patrilineal societies” (Stone 1997:271). Some of these patrilineal societies also carry the tradition of patrogenesis, where the man is the genitor of the child (King 2008:324). Therefore a child of a Palestinian woman and a Jordanian man would be considered completely Jordanian. Jordanian men have the exclusive property of the woman’s reproductive capacity and the children she bears. Therefore, honor killing is considered the just form of punishment for a woman who deviates for her specified gender role and reproductive expectations.

Why would women be so closely bound up with the concept of the honor of the family? And, in a related way, why is a man’s honor usually tied up with his ability to defend his opinions, while a woman’s honor is usually tied up with chastity? King (2008) states that it is vital to study the reproductive sovereignty in the case of countries with occurrences of honor crimes (King 2008:317). A woman’s honor, in the context of Jordan, is the reproductive sovereignty by a patrilineage or larger entity, such as a state (King 2008:318 and Stone 1997:271). The patrilineal kinship of Jordan alongside the strong culture of patrogenesis allow the male members of society to be completely accountable for their offspring; a woman serves as the bearer of *his* children (King 2008:324). Honor killing becomes a punishment for women violating the man’s property through sexual

immorality, removing the possibility that another man's "seed" may have infected the lineage (Stone 1997:272). Furthermore, honor killing asserts the patriline's power over women's reproductive ability. The symbol of a woman's honor becomes materialized by her hymen, and the value of virginity increases in society (273). Honor killing, therefore, is a method of restoring a family's honor by reasserting power and strength through wiping out the shame due to a woman's misconduct (Abu-Lughod 1986: 286 *n.16*). I will address the issue of virginity in Arab and Jordanian context soon after I further explore the manifestation of the notion of honor.

Explaining the strongly gendered quality of the notion of honor through discussion of patrilineality works well in explaining certain peculiarities in the practice of honor killings. Some of these peculiarities deal with Arab and Jordanian family dynamics affecting family relationships (Inhorn 1996:3). The brother-sister relations in the Arab world show a "connective love/power dynamic between brother and sister" (Joseph 1999:115). The concept of connectivity, which are "relationships in which a person's boundaries are relatively fluid so that persons feel a part of significant others," is essential in understanding the family relations in patriarchal societies (12-13). Individuals in such societies are not separate or autonomous (12). Therefore, we see connectivity in brother-sister relations. The brother asserts his masculinity by urging his sister to embrace society's conception of femininity. The brother-sister relationship is an extension of the father-daughter relationship, therefore extending the brother's power over his sister's reproductive sovereignty (119-120). The relationship develops as the sister learns to serve her brother and the brother learns to have control over his sisters (117-119). When the father defers his protection over the daughter to his son, the son will

embrace the society's definitions of masculinity and purify the family's honor for protection (120). The roles the Arab family members take on reinforce the notion of honor in the Arab society and thus make these crimes inevitable.

So far, honor appears to be an unchanging social code in the Arab and Jordanian society. Nevertheless, urbanization of the concept of honor has occurred due to rapid changes in the Jordanian society (Dodd 1973:47). Jordan has experienced a growth in the population coupled by a growth of the city life. In Western cities, the increase in population size and density makes people more anonymous, because they become "too numerous to be identified as individuals, too preoccupied to develop close ties" (47). Additionally, the mobility of the people due to market needs breaks off social ties geographically and socially (48). The maintenance of honor and the modesty code become difficult to enforce since surveillance becomes more challenging. Nevertheless, the survival of honor definitions and manifestations remain s possible and probable, especially in smaller communities in the urban city (48-49). The close quarters of Middle Eastern cities are examples of smaller communities maintaining the notion of honor (49). Urbanization could diminish the notion of honor to adapt to a new lifestyle or it can fortify these notions by modifying social norms to protect honor (49).

Political and ideological change brought by war and revolution may have an effect on family definitions of honor in the Arab world, as well. In a state of war or revolution, men forget about defending their honor and focus on the ideological and political change that may occur (Dodd 1973: 51). In these moments, women have joined men with their fight against a foreign occupier in Arab countries (Dodd 1973:51). Women surveyed four years after Algerian independence in 1962 stated that no change

had been made in the role of women in Algeria; the Algerian man did not change (51-52). In the case of Palestine, a popular motto came about that motivate patriotism as well as the inclusion of women in the opposition, *il 'ard qabl il- 'ird*, “land before honor” (52). Changes to the notion of honor can be motivated by a change of political and ideological factors; however, how long will it take before it is noticeable?

Similarly, the education of women, especially in different cultural contexts, could affect the way women define the notion of honor. After ethnographic research done with Palestinian Israeli woman at Hebrew University, Lauren Erdreich (2006) discusses how women’s views of independence, family, and honor are challenged once they are matriculated in an Israeli university. After matriculating at the Hebrew University, Palestinian women begin to gain a new sense of independence as they try to adjust to the language and Israeli culture (Erdreich 2006:130). Erdreich follows some Palestinian students as they struggle to adapt to the “western” culture at Hebrew University (129). She observes that some Palestinian women retain aspects of honor, such as the upkeep of the woman’s body by wearing more conservative clothes, while others explore the limits of their new environment by becoming more sexually liberated (142). The interaction between the Arab culture and the Israeli “western” culture redefines the way these women and men view honor and independence. The change noticed with Palestinian students in their different context shows that honor may be a malleable concept highly dependent on context.

Despite the factors that change the notion of honor in the Arab world, the value of virginity remains high. The idea is that women must be sexually “pure” and untouched is common. Arab women tend to connect their personal honor alongside the whole family’s

honor to their virginity. A woman's intact hymen indicates her honorability (Inhorn 1996:53 and 182). Some Arab women may still want to uphold this purity because of personal preference; others are just pressured by the existence of honor to remain virgins (182). In Jordan and many other Arab countries, the family's honor "rests on the premarital conduct of its female members", so that, if a woman loses her virginity before marriage she destroys the honor of her family (182). On the other hand, "a son can never bring shame to his family," so arguably the son's premarital loss of virginity does not disgrace the family (182-183). Virginity and its physical proof become a woman's only defense against suspicions of immorality and honor crimes.

Virginity loss before marriage is so tabooed that rape becomes almost inexcusable in the Jordanian context. When it comes to rape, Jordan has serious sentences for those who are charged with this crime; however, social issues tend to obscure the system (Warrick 2005:316). Since honor is valued highly with the virginity of women, we can see why rape crimes can also go unreported in Jordan. Therefore, the legal code is only enforced once the crime becomes public (Warrick 2005:340). Even though the legal code punishes rapists, families of the victim can prevent shame by marrying her off their daughter to the rapist (320). Most women accept the marriage because of the social pressures of honor and its association with virginity (320). Divorce could only happen after three years of marriage or if the woman cannot bear children (321). While Islam does not endorse forced marriage, marriages that take place as an outcome of rape can certainly be interpreted as forced (322). These laws, regulations, and customs are implemented with society's conceptions of honor in mind, whether this notion of honor is seen as originating from religion or non-religious cultural traditions.

The close association between virginity and honor is problematic for women who choose to be engaged in sexual activity or are raped before marriage. ‘*Urfi* marriages have become a popular phenomenon in the Arab world (Kneel 2010). Young Arabs in Egypt specially have overcome social rules of honor and have engaged in dating and premarital relations through signing a paper (sometimes with witnesses) indicating a secret marriage and therefore allowing premarital relations (Kneel 2010). Instead of changing the deeply rooted customs and social norms, the youth feel it more useful to trick the system despite the possibly negative consequences. Women realize the importance of their virginity and therefore find loopholes to avoid bringing shame to their families. A recent news article addressed the widespread importing of virginity faking devices in the Arab world. While Arab women are trying to move away from social norms concerning premarital relations, the consequences of losing their virginity before marriage remain daunting (Abdelhadi 2009). The article also states that women in the Arab world have resorted to the much more expensive and dangerous hymen repair surgery (Abdelhadi 2009). Either virginity-faking methods give women the ability avoid shame on their wedding night.

The materialization of honor in a woman’s body is not its only form; reputation is another form and gossiping contributes to shaping it. Jordanians use *namīmih*, or *ḥaki al-nās*, which literally means talk of the people, as an evaluation of someone’s reputation, and, therefore, their honor. A person’s reputation reflects his or her perceived personality and honor, even if it may not be completely accurate. Jordanians and especially the youth looking to marry must be mindful of their reputation to keep their family’s name honorable. Jeopardizing one’s reputation directly correlates to one’s honor. Rana

Husseini, a Jordanian journalist and activist, explained to me in an interview that the close-knit social network present in Jordan contributes to incidents of honor crimes (Interview with Rana Husseini July 2009). Referring back to her newly published book, she claims that “sometimes all that is needed to incite murder is a deliberate malicious campaign of gossip” (Husseini 2009:xiii). One’s reputation, heavily influenced by gossiping, is an indication of honorability. Having a good reputation (ie. abiding by Jordanian moral code) is something every Jordanian strives to maintain. As a Jordanian who grew up in such a society, I have seen and experienced the importance of reputation and being honorable. The public eye and rumors can destroy one’s reputation and honor.

The way honor is understood in Jordanian society directly relates to the phenomenon of honor crimes. The significance of honor and gender inequality in the Mediterranean has its resonance in the Middle East and in Jordan in particular. Male dominance in Arab societies allows men to control the sexual activity of the women. Through the placement of so much value on women and their virginity, the female virgin comes to be the symbol of honor. Therefore, elevating women’s virginity creates a system that is vigilant with regard to the actions of women in society. Not only is her honor embedded in her physiology, but the Jordanian woman embodies the honor of her family. She is constantly watched through a merciless gossiping system. Jordan’s relatively small size makes reputation highly valuable. A woman who is suspected of acting immorally risks a bad reputation, which could threaten her honor; in turn, her honor is tied to the honor of her family members due to the concept of collective responsibility. Additionally, tribalism and commonly used Jordanian phrases reinforce honor and its conceptions. Therefore, a deviation from the societal norm becomes

dishonorable, thus needing a punishment. The consequences of shame from immorality are so extreme that death of the guilty woman is perceived as the only way to cleanse the family's honor since she may carry a bad "seed." Honor killing can be considered a punishment created as a result of these deviations from what is perceived as honorable.

IV. Debating honor and honor killings in Jordan

In an incident cited by Al Jazeera, a seventeen year old teenager in Jordan felt his honor was threatened by means of mere gossip. The young man ended his twenty-five year old sister's life after receiving phone calls that his sister was involved in immoral acts while her husband was away. The phone calls even claimed that his sister had been impregnated by another man. The young man feared a bad reputation so much that he strangled her to death without seeking further evidence. The post-mortem examination showed that the sister was not pregnant and had not been involved in any recent sexual activity (Al-Jazeera October 2003). A similar case occurred in 2003 when a man ended the life of his sixteen-year-old sister because she had not been present in several family occasions, making her a suspect of immoral activity. Medical investigations showed that she was still a virgin (Al-Jazeera August 2003).

News stories about honor crimes bring the incidents into the public eye and the public interest makes honor killing a topic of debate in Jordan. There is no one united view as to whether people should address the issue, and, if they should, how. Looking at the terms of the debate is helpful in understanding the way the Jordanian society functions and how it responds to this social phenomenon.

The way Jordanians perceive and explain the existence of honor crimes is paramount to understanding why the issue persists and how to limit the occurrences. I limit my analysis of public opinion to three examples of discourse: a comparison between two printed books discussing Jordanian customs and honor killing, an interview with a police officer from the family protection department of the police force, and public comments on news articles posted online. These forms of discourse about honor crimes

provide glimpses of a range of Jordanian reactions to the issue. Moreover, I use my own experience as a Jordanian, born and raised in Amman, to further show the differences in perspectives on honor crimes. Even though the forms of discourse show a variety of opinions, I realize that they offer a mere sampling of a much wider range of public opinion on the issue of honor crimes in Jordan.

‘Obaydāt vs. Hussein: the possibility of a generational gap

In this section I explore two forms of publications that are readily available to Jordanians. Dr. Suleiman Ahmad ‘Obaydāt(1986), a professor of social science in the University of Jordan, wrote *Dirāsa fī ‘ādāt wa-taqālīd al-mujtama‘ al-urdunī* (*A Study of the Customs and Traditions of Jordanian Society*) to serve as a reference for university students studying social science. I compare ‘Obaydāt’s book to Rana Hussein’s (2009) *Murder in the Name of Honor*. Hussein’s book, which was released in both English and Arabic, was a recent publication that promised to stir controversy in the Kingdom on the issue of honor crimes. Her book includes a collection of honor crimes that she has reported since the beginning of her journalistic career in 1993 and her analysis of the Jordanian situation.

In his introduction, ‘Obaydāt states that knowledge of Jordanian customs and values can be useful in the comparative study of culture (‘Obaydāt 1986:5). In addition, he claims that it helps Jordanian students understand the current social, economic, political and cultural structures of the Jordanian society (5). ‘Obaydāt relies on surveys, interviews, and his experience as a Jordanian to produce the information in his book (6). I was immediately intrigued by ‘Obaydāt’s book because he took such a strong, almost activist stance toward the material. An examination of the chapters that deal with Jordanian

women, marriage, and romantic relationships shows ‘Obaydāt’s tone to be nostalgic, harkening back to a supposedly pre-technological time— a time when the Jordanian woman was allegedly ‘in her place.’

‘Obaydāt reveals himself as a traditionalist early in the book. Listing various positive values by which Jordanians allegedly abide, he includes honesty (*as-ṣidq*), sacrifice (*al-ithar*), nobility (*al-shahāma*), pride (*al-ibā’*), purity (*al-naqā’*), and chastity (*al-ṭahr*). He lists revenge and tribalism as values, but labels them as widespread negatives, claiming that they are so strongly entrenched in Jordanian society that even the threat of imprisonment does not deter people from acting upon these values (‘Obaydāt 1986:4). The notion of honor, though not listed, looms behind all these values; indeed, his list of positive values is practically a portrait of the Jordanian ideal of the honorable individual. His inclusion of chastity and purity in particular reflect common Jordanian values regarding gender relations and premarital sex. He emphasizes that revenge and intolerance are negative values that cannot be eradicated from Jordan even though there are laws against the manifestation of these values. These negative values, as I understand his argument, arise as a reaction to violation of the positive values in the name of honor.

‘Obaydāt continuously refers back with admiration for the rural lifestyle and the Jordanian past for its strong hold on traditions and values. Placing so much value on traditions of the past, ‘Obaydāt becomes a clear advocate for traditionalism. The words *sharaf* and *ird* appear frequently in ‘Obaydāt’s description when describing relations between the genders (‘Obaydāt 1986:63-64). Using a nostalgic tone when referring to the past, ‘Obaydāt describes the interaction between the genders as “honorable” and based on “good morals,” stressing how the honor of the woman was the honor of the clan (64).

Such a tone continues as he claims that although men and women worked side by side until the late hours of the night, “immoral thoughts never crossed their minds” (65). Moreover, ‘Obaydāt claims that women generally felt safe to go out in the dark alone to get water or return from their workday, especially since electricity was not common in houses then. Occasionally, men joined women during their outdoor tasks at night, but that was to protect them from hyenas. He concludes briefly that in this picture-perfect Jordanian society, engagement was made particularly uncomplicated because the women were honorable and the men were fortunate to have them (65).

‘Obaydāt delves further in discussing Jordanian gender relations. He explains the traditions of honorable courting and marriage in Jordan, and how marriages in the past were arranged by having the family or clan (‘Obaydāt 1986:66). Another somewhat interesting way was for the woman to let the man know her interest by having poets write about her beauty and honor (65). Her target would fall in love with the idea of her even if they had not been in direct contact. After puberty, a man could not speak to a woman he loved publicly, since it would jeopardize her honor (80). Their love remained silent until someone discovered the interest and then their love story would literally be the talk of the whole town (80). If the two dared to meet in secret, they risked being seen and therefore punished. If the news of a secret meeting reached the parents of the woman, she would be abused and insulted by them.

Parents of Jordanian youth of the past subscribed to the popular saying, “Our daughters do not fall in love” (81). ‘Obaydāt tells the story of a Jordanian village family that ended up punishing and abusing the daughter who was caught looking – by accident – at her fiancé from the rooftop. At this particular village, the men of the family took off

their headdress before the punishment to signify that their honor was jeopardized by their daughter/sister. After the beating, the men would replace the headdress as a symbol that honor has been retrieved. She was then locked in the house for three days because her actions were shameful (81). Initially, it was surprising that this particular woman did not have to face the severe punishment of honor killing, but then I remembered that she was already engaged to this man.

My questions about the traditions of honor crimes were soon addressed in the same chapter discussing marriage customs. ‘Obaydāt retells a story he heard during his research in a Jordanian city in 1984 (‘Obaydāt 1986:83). A man had to ask for his lover’s hand in marriage without bringing his family because his lover was pregnant from their pre-marital sex. He avoided bringing his family because he feared they would suspect their immorality and bring shame to her and her family, therefore preventing him from marrying her. Her father refused to give his daughter’s hand in marriage unless this man brought his family. Due to fear of honor killing, the daughter and her mother conspire to have the disapproving father killed by his youngest son. The coalition of the women in the family makes this case interesting; honor killing may not be supported by all members of the Jordanian family. Also, the role and leadership of the mother shows that not all mothers would support honor crimes. The mother trained her youngest son to use the gun to kill his father. Accidentally, the gun fell and the son was not able to finish his mission (83). For fear of the father finding out about the conspiracy, the mother picked up the gun and killed her husband (84). ‘Obaydāt’s judgmental tone overcomes the story; he stresses the evil character of the women in this family rather than considering the self-defense factor that motivated the action. In a way, we can read this story as a parable

rather than an actual event: the result of defying authority and defying honor killings is the actual death of the male head of the household at the hands of his wife and child. His choice to tell this story to his readers suggests his preconceptions about women and honor. ‘Obaydāt’s utopian details about the traditional Jordanian life hint that today’s youth are not to be trusted in the same interactions because their intentions are immoral. His implicit comparison between the present and the past conveys a sense of disappointment for deserting what he considers cultural and historical values.

Throughout his explanation of the tradition of marriage, ‘Obaydāt frequently mentions the change that the Jordanian society has encountered over the years. Elderly Jordanians often criticize today’s Jordanians with a rhyming Arabic saying: “*jīl bu ‘bu ‘, byākul mā byishba ‘, bīrūh mā birja ‘, bitnādī mā bisma ‘*” meaning “frightening [new] generation, it eats and never satisfies its hunger, it goes and never returns, you call it and it does not listen” (‘Obaydāt 1986:209). ‘Obaydāt further condemns today’s youth because they have marginalized the role of parents and family in the marriage process (86). ‘Obaydāt claims that the cultural and technological developments in Jordan have allowed for foreign ideologies to influence marriages (86). He condemns young Jordanians who leave Jordan for their educations and return with a degree and a foreign wife “without the knowledge of his parents” (86). His condemnatory tone does not hide his disappointment with what Jordan has become.

I cannot help but assume that ‘Obaydāt’s objective is to shed light on the glorious Jordanian past and advocate a return to that lifestyle. Nostalgia for the past becomes the overwhelming theme of the book. When ‘Obaydāt teaches these values and traditions in the university classroom, I am left wondering about their consequences. Whether he is

inventing a tradition or not, with this book ‘Obaydāt is invoking an ideal Jordanian society based on a romanticized and utopian past. ‘Obaydāt claims that most Jordanian values and customs originate from Islam. He believes that Jordanian values emerged from an Islamic and pre-Islamic context, giving these values the legitimacy of religion and history. He offers what he believes is the historical background behind Jordanian values and traditions, thereby making them seem old. It is important to point out, however, that evidence as to if these values come from an old Jordanian tradition are difficult to prove due to the largely oral nature of the sources (Shryock 1997:33). In his attempt to legitimize what he thinks are Jordanian values, I wonder if he is attempting to prevent customs from fading. He is ritualizing and repeating traditions in the form of a textbook, and by presenting these practices and values as ancient and unchanging. Students would be enticed to maintain such traditions because they have been alive for so long.

The idea of students learning about the traditional past raises questions about the effects of such indoctrination, especially when contrasted with recently released feminist books criticizing Jordanian traditions. While ‘Obaydāt attempts to revive Jordanian traditions, journalist and human rights activist Rana Husseinī fights to move Jordanians away from them. Rana Husseinī (2009), a Jordanian journalist, uses her book *Murder in the Name of Honor* to expose Jordan’s honor crimes. She examines the cases that she has previously reported and uses them to paint the best picture possible as to how and why they happen. Her book sheds light on the government and its response to the rising civil society in Jordan through her role in creating the Jordanian National Committee to Eliminate So-Called Honour Crimes (Husseinī 2009:32). The book tells Husseinī’s story

as a women's rights activist and dedicated Jordanian journalist hoping to raise awareness about honor crimes. Hussein believes that honor crimes have "no basis in Islam, the Jordanian Constitution or basic human rights," and that this crime will cease to exist only through the efforts of civil society (36).

Her book serves as an interesting comparison, because in part she comes to the same conclusion as 'Obaydāt: there is a clash between generations and traditions (Hussein 2009:214). Unlike 'Obaydāt, however, Hussein advocates changes in the society so as to close the gap between Jordan's generations, rather than to return to older traditions. Hussein claims that crimes of honor are "fed by the clash of old and new" that has been exacerbated by "urbanization and population growth" (214). Hussein argues that the view of the older generation is challenged by the increasing role of the woman in the labor force and the increase of women's rights (214). Additionally, activism and legal protections have increased in Jordan and worldwide (214-215). Both authors agree that Jordanians have become somehow confused by the introduction of new ideals, and that generational conflicts have resulted.

Hussein's solution to this clash, unlike 'Obaydāt's, is to promote change in Jordanian society in order to remove the generational gap and thus limit honor crimes. She calls for more governmental cooperation through harsher sentences for murderers of women, in order to create deterrence, as well as financial support for hotlines and shelters for the abused (Hussein 2009:215). Hussein calls for the education of children, as well as broader public awareness of the crimes (216). She believes that Jordan, including NGOs, the government, and the nuclear Jordanian family, must stop ignoring the question of women's rights and honor crimes, especially since they are connected to even

larger social issues (216). She encourages the development of a grassroots, comprehensive movement for women's rights. I would argue that Hussein's recommendations for freeing Jordan of honor crimes are really a call for deserting the traditional lifestyle 'Obaydāt advocates. She believes that revolutionizing Jordan's social and political spheres to embody more modern ideologies is more effective than regressing to past lifestyles.

I find it ironic that 'Obaydāt and Hussein's books are in agreement with regard to the diagnosis of Jordanian society, yet at odds with regard to the remedy. It is noteworthy that the authors appeal to different audiences. 'Obaydāt exposes university students to his more traditional views, while Hussein captures newspaper readers in her call for shedding the old customs. From my experience living in Jordan, I saw a large variance between people when it comes to the value of honor. The reliance on the modern-traditional argument is prevalent when considering social problems. Discussions often turn to blaming Western intervention, Western corruption and even the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. At the same time, both authors share the discourse that the problem with honor killing is a clash of generations. Hussein points to the changing times and argues that the Jordanian generations, old and young, need to reconcile (216). 'Obaydāt also recognizes the generational differences by speaking fondly of a past that was great and a present that lacks morals. It is interesting that even though both authors admit to a changing Jordanian society, they both prescribe opposite measures for reconciliation. Nonetheless, both authors advocate a one-sided compromise at the expense of either the traditionalists or the modernists.

They also both agree that the resulting clash of generations was not present in the past as it is today. However, their argument does not explain the instances of honor killing involving the younger brother rather than an older male figure. UNIFEM states that between the years 2000-2003, 45% of the honor crimes that occurred in Jordan were done by the victim's brother. Such high percentages bring to light connectivity and the brother-sister dynamic in Arab families discussed by Suad Joseph and examined in the previous chapter. Due to connections of love and dignity between the two, the sister has the responsibility of representing her brother's honor (Joseph 1999: 13 and 119). Therefore, he is more likely to punish her for defying and damaging his honor (119). The fact that so many brothers are the perpetrators of honor killings suggests that Hussein and Obeidat may be incorrect in tracing the phenomenon to a generational clash. At the same time, one can explain the high percentages of younger brothers killing their sisters by the fact that families want to take advantage of the juvenile sentence if the boys were under the age of eighteen. Another reason for committing an honor crime could be the existence of inheritance. The younger brother may use honor crimes as a guise for his intentions of a higher portion of inheritance. It may even mean that people advocating for traditional and more conservative lifestyle like 'Obaydāt are influencing more of the younger generation. Whatever may be the case—and a fuller picture would require a far richer set of data than is currently available—'Obaydāt and Hussein's argument of the clash of generations is not supported by the fact that brothers, not fathers or uncles, often commit honor crimes.

A news article and its online responses

We now turn an examination of comments submitted online following news stories about honor crimes. In this comparison I use *Al-Ghad*, an independent daily newspaper published in Amman. All of the news stories regard honor crimes that were committed in 2009 or 2010. The comments I analyze show a great deal of variation in thoughts and comments, and also point to some larger patterns in discourse.

The first of our cyberspace debates occurred on October 18th of 2009, concerning a case where a father stabbed his twenty-four year old daughter sixteen times after discovering she was pregnant out of wedlock (Al-‘idwan 2009). The father had suspicions about his daughter, and they were fortified after medical examinations. According to the article, he stabbed her on a main street, preventing others from coming close to her body until the police arrived. Within twelve hours of posting the article online, the article received eighty-six comments from readers, the most any article received that day. The comments vary vastly, reflecting the sharp variation in public discourse on honor crimes.

A pool of comments agreed that the father was justified in killing his daughter. In one comment, the reader said the girl deserved what happened to her, saying *al-tha’r wa-lā al-‘ār--* revenge is better than shame (Al-‘idwan, 2009). Another praises the father as *ḥakīm*, wise, for even considering to take her to the doctor to be sure before he killed her. The importance of the girl’s virginity is seen in the comments. One reader ridiculed defenders of the victim by claiming that she could not have gotten pregnant without breaking her hymen, and therefore she deserved her death. Her loss of virginity was

directly related to the father's shame and thus he was justified in killing her. Another commentator emphasized that she is burning in hell at the very moment that the people are commenting on the news article, and that God may not even forgive her for what she has done. A group of readers agreed that the father had to kill her since she was pregnant, and that there was no other option. Others pitied her father and the rest of the family for the shame this woman has caused them, reinforcing that her death was inevitable since she was pregnant out of wedlock. To these readers, the victim's pregnancy violated her father's honor and thus he was vindicated in killing her.

The perceived immorality and corruption of Jordanian society are highlighted by the many readers who commented that the father was at fault. One reader named Mark wrote *kama tazra' tahsud*, "you reap what you sew" (Al-'idwan 2009). I found it very peculiar that another reader named Taghreed commented the following:

The girl may have been at fault but where are her parents? And where is the proper way to raise children? The father should punish himself and then think of how to punish his daughter. I will not talk too much, I am a university [female] student and I know how a man can affect a girl but I do not act immorally because my diploma may come now and may come later but my reputation cannot be replaced, and may God help the ummah.

Taghreed presents an interesting point of view: not only is she blaming the parents for the mistake their daughter is perceived to have committed, but she is also attempting to show how she is better than this woman in her life. It is strange to me that she sympathizes with the victim by blaming the parents and legitimizing her own social life. Some agree that the father lost his control over the women in his family to western intrusion and therefore this is the natural result. On the other hand, defenders of the father's actions paint scenarios in

their comments to prove that the poor, hard-working father had no control over the situation because of poverty and the overpowering immorality that comes with westernization.

Some readers questioned the role of law and government. A reader named ‘Amayra blamed the government for all the blood lost in such crimes, citing the government’s lack of initiative in the matter of disciplining the youth of Jordan and preventing pre- or extra- marital sex (Al-‘idwan 2009). One reader wrote that Jordanian males will have to slaughter their immoral women and men, until the government returns to the values set by God. A reader name Yaser openly condemned “the government and its laws” for encouraging honor crimes, and even accused the police of protecting the murderers. Some called for the government to kill the father in the same way that he killed his daughter to make a strict example for future cases of honor killings. It is striking that not one comment praised the government or the law enforcement officers for their actions; in fact, the comments about the government are overwhelmingly negative. Readers wanted the government to prevent honor crimes by monitoring the youth, by maintaining Islamic ideals and not “westernizing,” or by ending poverty.

Various readers view honor crimes as a direct result of Jordan’s steering away from Islam. Readers like al-Nabulsi provide their own interpretation of how Islam deals with adultery and sexual immorality, suggesting that women should be whipped but not killed (Al-‘idwan 2009). One reader, Abu ‘Ibaid, copied Qur’anic verses and interpreted them to show that honor crimes have no place in Islam. A reader named Shiry states that honor crimes are the result of leaving Islam. In some cases, however, Islam is used to argue the contrary. For example, a supporter of honor killings states that theft and

adultery are results of steering away from Islam. The logic maintains that without the existence of theft and adultery, there would be no need for honor killings. The scholarly debate regarding the role of Islam in motivating honor killings is therefore echoed in public discourse. The multiple usages of Islam show an interesting relationship between religion and discourse in Jordan. Returning to Foucault's discussion on discourse, we see that people's different ideologies emerge from their representation of religion through discourse (Hall 2007:56). People use religion in their discourse to defend or condemn honor crimes. People selectively pick evidence from religion to support their own ideas about honor and its manifestation in the Jordanian society.

A group of anti-honor crimes readers used strong words to denounce the incident. The most commonly used words to describe honor crimes are *jahl*, meaning ignorance and *takhalluf*, meaning backwardness or retardation (Al-'idwan 2009). The frequent use of those two words creates a division in the population, some viewing the others as less educated or less cultured. Like 'Obaydāt and Husseinī, some readers view the cultural and sociological gap to be the root cause behind the existence of honor crimes. These readers themselves help create these cleavages in society by excluding themselves from these *mutakhallifīn*, the backwards people. By distancing themselves from the other side, modernists and traditionalists blame the other for the miscommunication and for the murder of women, even though honor crimes are not monopolized by the a single social class or ethnicity.

An Interview with a Police Officer

In my attempt to find out how the legal process has adapted to, responded to, and limited instances of honor crimes, I resorted to the Jordanian police department. On a bright July morning in Amman in 2009, I found myself drinking coffee in the office of the head of the family protection police force. A female police officer quickly came into the office and happily agreed to guide me around the department. The head of the department was sure to emphasize to the female officer that she tell me all that I needed to know. Officer Dina (a pseudonym) ushered me around the department dressed in form-fitting civilian clothing, her very long black hair swaying freely side-to-side as she walked. I was surprised at Dina's seemingly relaxed appearance--I was expecting a uniformed officer, yet Dina had a skirt on and her long hair was down. I figured that it would make sense to have an officer dressed casually to appeal to the female victims of domestic violence. Dina took me into a small theater room in the department, one that she assured me would be quiet and free of interruptions. The room welcomed me with a large picture of the current King Abdullah and another smaller one of the late King Hussein. Other pictures of important figures in the department and the Jordanian flag were all around the room. I had the eerie sensation that someone may be watching. Nevertheless, I took my seat and began asking about the department and the cases they encounter.

Dina was kind enough to give me some background information about the family protection department. I soon realized that she had done this before, since she appeared to regurgitate the information as if reading from a pamphlet. I had a recording device with me so that I could record the interview, but when I asked her if I could use it, she quickly refused, so I had to take handwritten notes. She proceeded to inform me that this

department was created in 1997 from a royal initiative to protect battered women in Jordan. The continuous paying of homage to the king and the royal family throughout the interview made me feel that I was brought to this particular room with the large picture of the king for a reason. I also quickly felt confirmed that someone was in fact watching: Dina sat right across from me in a place from which she could clearly read my notes.

As she explained the details of the family protection department, I quickly noticed how the law works in accordance with social norms and traditions. First, if the family protection department receives a call about abuse in someone's home, officers cannot enter the household without the permission of the head of the household. The jurisdiction of the law cannot go over that of the head male, unless underage children are being abused in public. This one exception leaves room for abuse done in private, abuse of children over the age of eighteen, and abuse of the wives. Dina maintained the systematic honoring of the royal family and the higher-ranking officials when discussing the intricacies of the law.

As I steered the conversation to sexual assaults and honor crimes, I discovered that the family protection department has very little power when it comes to prevention and assistance. The department provides battered women with shelter from the abusive male; however, a mere written pledge by the responsible male releases the woman back to her abusive husband, father, brother, etc. The male has to sign a monetary pledge for a relatively small amount, promising that he will not beat her again. If he breaks this pledge, he is to pledge again but for a larger sum of money. In addition, Dina informed me that a woman who is suspected of immoral sexual activity is to be placed in jail until the fear of her parents killing her is gone. She mentioned instances where families have pledged to

keep their daughter alive, but once she was released the family ended her life, in the end simply paying the fine for breaking the pledge. By now, I was shocked by her blatant mistrust of the legal system and her increasingly relaxed tone.

Even though both of us are Jordanian women, I perceived sharp differences in our understandings of honor and therefore in our views of what social norms should be. During the first half of the interview I felt a gap between us that I only noticed in retrospect after her tone had changed and the gap had narrowed. During that first half of the interview, she answered my questions as a police officer would to an irresponsible teen as if, were it not for her and the information she was giving me, I would be involved in the immoral sexual acts she was talking about. I heard the word ‘*ayb*’ various times when she referred to sexual abuse cases. Here was a police officer who is considered a counselor to battered women who avoided talking about crimes that involve too much sexual abuse because it is ‘*ayb*’. She addressed me carefully because she assumed I was less informed about sexual abuse and the consequences of sexual immorality. My questions about the female victims appeared to have crossed the line of what is acceptable to discuss and what is ‘*ayb*’, and create a more uneven ground for our conversation. Our definition of what is honorable and what is shameful was starkly different when it came to talking about sexual abuse, but I avoided displaying my surprise at the difference between our views, and nodded in agreement with her statements.

At some point in the conversation, and for a reason not entirely clear to me, Dina began to address me from the position of an equal rather than as from the position of a more knowledgeable law enforcer. I recall her eyes opening wide as she was explaining

to me how she discovered a road on the way to Irbid where young men and women make out in their cars. She expressed dismay at the fact that she cannot stop at each car and arrest the troublemakers. Thinking about her comment in retrospect highlights the issue of punishment of immorality. Dina gave the impression that punishment for immorality is not debated, but who does the punishment is what matters. Therefore, the problem with honor killing is the fact that the punishment is administered by the wrong authority and is too extreme. The punishment of death for immorality was too much for Dina and many of the readers of *Al-Ghad*. In this way, Dina and many of the readers were on the same page as ‘Obaydāt, who agrees with the punishing women accused of immorality but not killing them. The degree and method of punishment discussed is as debated as the need to punish itself.

During the interview with Dina, I was confused by her very modern appearance and her seemingly traditional moral code. The interview left me questioning if most Jordanians feel that sexual liberty or immorality must be punished. Who is entitled to define immorality? Furthermore, who is entitled to punish immorality? Is Dina, with her inhibitions about discussing sex, yet her position as a law enforcer, entitled to punish those she views as the culprits? Dina’s notions of today’s seemingly wild youth affected her judgment on sexual abuse and honor killing victims. I was also left wondering about the perpetuation of these more traditional social ideas despite the noticeable influences from other countries. I was also left wondering about the strong connection between Islam and the Jordanian government implemented by the use of *sharī‘a* and Islamic courts. Islam advocates punishment for adulterers only if adultery was rightly proved, yet Dina wanted to take matters into her own hands and assume adultery was occurring. The

fragility of the system makes it clear to me why the status quo remains in place and honor crimes continue to occur.

I further felt a difference in our views when it came to her description of sexual abuse. The law categorizes rape according to the perceived damage that it has done. I was surprised to see that sexual abuse was divided into rape and anal rape to highlight the importance of virginity. In addition, exhibition, which includes cases where people who have not previously agreed to watch are exposed to sexual display, was considered as serious a sexual offence as rape. The inclusion of and emphasis on exhibition in the category of sexual abuse resonates with the conceptions of honor when it comes to the female. The Jordanian society expects women to be pure and chaste, and any form of sexual interaction can desecrate their honor. Dina informed me that if rape was proven, by law the man has to marry the woman for at least five years to protect his and her honor. She elaborated that one of her acquaintances in the military was engaged in sexual relations out of wedlock and after three years the woman got pregnant. After DNA testing, he was forced to marry her by the court. He would marry her to protect her honor, or *yostor 'aleha*, meaning to cover for her implying, protect her honor for her. Dina said that he abused the woman psychologically throughout the five years. To my amazement, she was as sympathetic to her male acquaintance as much as she was to his unwanted wife.

Even though we had different opinions about the way society should function, we both agreed that the existing medical and educational systems were lacking in efficiency. Nevertheless, I believe that by the end of the interview she thought we shared the same social and moral views. I did not challenge her or react strongly to any of her comments, hence a bond of trust somehow developed. Dina changed her tone dramatically from a

stern and well-rehearsed officer to an employee dissatisfied with her job. She began criticizing the system by pointing out that most of the medical tests done after cases of sexual abuse were conducted by male doctors, in her words “enhancing the shame” of the female. Furthermore, women who were sexually assaulted did not know how to protect the proof of the crime. Dina further criticized the family protection department and the legal and public health system even more openly. She candidly informed me that her beginning years at the family protection department were especially hard because she learned of cases that she would have never imagined could happen. She cried at home on some days. Her knowledge about rape and abuse was limited to begin with, yet she was expected to serve in her position. Her intentions were to be in another department but her tough luck led her to the family protection department. Additionally, she informed me that the department itself suffered from gender inequality. Male officers received more attention and better benefits than the female officers. I later noticed this first-hand when a male officer interrupted Dina while she was giving me a tour of the department to give me the names of people he thought would add to my research. His disregard for Dina and attempt to impress me with more information were clear indications of the perceived gender roles within the department. She claimed that the department was also plagued with *wasta*. Literally meaning connection, *wasta* allows for bending of the rules because of related people’s personal connection with the case. A simple phone call to one of the heads of the department can erase a whole case from existence within minutes.

I expected Dina to be a model citizen in favor of everything Jordanian because she works with the police department. I was proven both right and wrong in this interview. She abided by the social norms of glorifying the efforts of the department and

the royal initiative to help Jordanian families. But she also shared the dominant patriarchal norm that shamed women who pursue sexual relations before marriage. Her frustrations about lacking sexual education and psychological preparedness, and about gender inequality in the department, showed her obvious dissatisfaction with the current state of the society. Dina could be one of various Jordanian women who see a gap between law, Islam, and enforcement in Jordan. As her interviewer, I attempted to remain neutral throughout the conversation, agreeing with her and her ideas about the Jordanian society. If I had not been, then we would have argued in the same way as ‘Obaydāt and Husseini or the readers of *Al-Ghad* did. I was raised with different perceptions of honor and shame and did not share her wish to punish the youth who were immoral. I would attribute the differences between our perceptions the obvious factor, my experience studying and living abroad. Living in the United States contributed to shaping my educational experience, and therefore my affected my perception of the notion of honor. In that respect, I am as much the produce of the cleavages in Jordanian society as anyone.

Members of the Jordanian public struggle to address honor crimes by blaming Western influence and generational gaps and by debating the true message of Islam. The various views on the issue of honor killing and the imperfect information about the crimes set multiple hurdles in the way of understanding honor crimes. The perpetuation of these ideas about honor and honor crimes frustrates attempts to limit their occurrence. Furthermore, the use of the generational gap theory has masked tackling the more pressing issues of patrilineality, the weakness of the Jordanian legal process and the way in which public discourse shapes public action and vice versa.

V. Implications of these findings

Jordan's struggle with honor crimes is deeply woven into the society. The Jordanian lifestyle revolves around the notion of honor, as displayed through the country's moral code, everyday language, and family dynamics. In Jordan's patrilineal and patriarchal society, honor crimes are merely one way in which honor is expressed. Despite the efforts of civil society to battle this stain on the national image, it is difficult given the issue's entrenchment in the country's social norms. But how does one proceed from here?

Is it possible to uproot the notion of honor altogether? Removing the conceptions of honor would theoretically free women from the burden of being the physical representation of honor. I also assume that it would relax the collective responsibility present in Jordanian society and instead make each individual responsible for his or her own actions. Nevertheless, many of the positive social norms, such as respect for the elderly, generosity, hospitality, and honesty are related to the notion of honor. The desire to remove the negative ideas associated with honor would also remove positive values and characteristics and even lead to the collapse of the Jordanian identity. I am doubtful that uprooting the notion of honor would be a possibility, or even that it would be desirable.

The longstanding anxiety about the corrupt and corrupting West adds a unique disadvantage to women's sexual liberation processes. People's discourse on honor crimes conveys trepidation about the adoption of Western or modern ideals, and liberating women sexually is widely seen as Western corruption of Arab and Muslim ideals. In the *Al-Ghad* comments and 'Obaydat's book, we see that the discourse on honor and honor

crimes is tied to fears of a loss of identity and culture that is believed to accompany women's sexual liberation. King's (2008) study of Iraqi Kurdistan speaks to the fear of losing *namus*, the Kurdish word for honor, after opening up to the "outside" (331). An uprising against Ba'hist control in March 1991 was followed by the entry of foreign goods and people (331). The presence of Western NGOs and traders in Iraqi Kurdistan led to an initial sense of liberalization in society, as shown by the relaxed dress of women at the time. Soon after, "a hyper-concern with propriety again choreographed women's lives" because Kurds feared that the Western forces challenged their notion of *namus* (332). The notion of honor is so embedded in the Middle Eastern culture that for many, losing it means losing a sense of identity.

A key issue in Jordan is whether it is the state or the family that is the proper enforcer of the morality code. For defenders of honor killings, the family is the proper enforcer. For many in this camp, the only thing that would hold greater authority than the honor code is Islam. Islamic legal approaches to adultery leave much to be desired but nonetheless, would be an improvement over the current situation in that Jordanians would have to standardize the way in which adultery is punished. A standardized punishment of adultery would then make the legal course for responding to honor killings more predictable. The constitution would have to be revised to remove Article 98 and Article 340, both of which give men a reduced penalty for honor crimes (Nanes 2003:117). Right now, these two articles allow for the judge's subjective opinion to interfere in cases pertaining to honor crimes. It is likely that honor crimes would decrease under Islamic law due to the specific regulations set forth for adultery. In essence, reliance on Islamic

law would work against social codes of conduct that relate to honor and would perhaps decrease honor crimes.

However, the case of Iran illustrates many imperfections within an Islamic regime. While investigating honor crimes in the region, I did not find particular research that related to cases in Iran. The lack of data could be because honor crimes do not occur or that the government is not vocal about their occurrences. Nevertheless, I found various sources on human rights and feminist movements that are not pleased with Iran's current regime for a wide range of reasons (Khorasani 2009). During the 54th Commission on the Status of Women, held in New York, in March of this year, Iranian feminist Rezvan Moghaddam said in her speech, "I just want to add that as a woman in Iran your safety and security in the streets public or private places can be violated by authorities at any time" (Moghaddam 2010). In her speech, she elaborates further on the various violations of women's rights that take place in Iran with regard to freedom of speech and occupation. Even though data is not readily available about Iranian honor crimes, feminists are not pleased with the status of women under an Islamic regime. The case of Iran suggests that a more vigorous application of Islamic law, even if it ameliorated the problem of honor crimes, could lead to many other practices detrimental to women.

The examples of discourse on honor crimes that I have examined show a considerable dissatisfaction with the current way the Jordanian government tends to treat honor crimes. Even if it were easy to urge the government to listen to the wishes of the Jordanian citizens concerning honor crimes, Jordanians cannot agree on a unified response to the problem. While many people turn to Islam to support their arguments, the invocation of religion is used both to defend and to contest honor crimes. Furthermore,

while some Jordanians question the government's ability to enforce morality among the young, others attack the granting of reduced penalties for the killers, and still others hold both views simultaneously. The range of views is wide, making it difficult for the government to formulate its response to honor crimes on the basis of public opinion

The difficulties of addressing honor killings on a state level are further dramatized through the case of Turkey. In hopes of joining the European Union, Turkey has imposed stricter punishments for honor attacks against women and girls (Bilefsky 2006). Nevertheless, reports show that honor killings and suicides as a result of threats of killing by family member continue to take place. To avoid legal repercussion, Turkish women are "locked in a room for days with rat poison, a pistol or a rope, and told by their families that the only thing resting between their disgrace and redemption is death" (Bilefsky 2006). The Turkish legal system is much harsher with regard to honor crimes than the Jordanian legal system, yet honor crimes persist. The fact that the laws have been tightened but the problem persists suggests that it is not enough to simply change the laws—at a fundamental level, attitudes must change. If the people themselves were not convinced of the social change imposed by the law, they will find ways to maneuver around it.

Yet, if we look beyond Turkey, some more hopeful patterns emerge from situations in which transformation in the socioeconomic structure of patriarchal societies has resulted in changes in the notions of kinship, gender, and honor. In the case of India, reports of bride burning have decreased considerably as India shifted to become an urban industrialized economy (Stone 1997:275). One possibility for this drop may have been the result of the decline in Indian fertility rates (275). As women became more valuable

for society because of their reproductive ability since growth in society depends on her, they gained more power within the family structure. In China, the One-Child Policy disturbed the newborn gender ratio, and created problems with securing wives since males outnumbered females in the gender ration. Today, the strong preference to have male children is fading. Having daughters has become as good as having sons, especially since Chinese parents report that daughters take better care of their parents (276). In this sense, the One-Child Policy is arguably enhancing the status of the Chinese woman. The factors affecting the notion of honor are indirectly and slowly changing the role of women in society. In the case of Jordan, similar urbanization and demographic change, such as the decrease in the fertility rate, have taken place but its effects on the rate of honor crimes are debatable (CIA The World Factbook 2009). It remains to be seen whether honor killings will abate, and, if they do, whether such abatement will be the result of direct confrontation from the authorities and civil society or the result of indirect changes linked to wider social and economic transformations.

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